

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY ROME

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AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, SP

SUBJ: SPANISH SYNDICAL ORGANIZATION (SSO) AND SYNDICAL REFORM
UNDER NEW SSO MARTIN VILLA/SOCIAS TOP LEADERSHIP TEAM

REF: MADRID 1423

BEGIN SUMMARY: NEW LIBERAL SYNDICAL MINISTER MARTIN VILLA, WHO
HEADS GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED SPANISH SYNDICAL ORGANIZATION
(SSO), HAS NAMED HIS SSO LEADERSHIP TEAM, INCLUDING LIBERAL

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SSO SEC GEN SOCIAS, AMID INDICATIONS HE MAY NOW MOVE MORE RAPIDLY

IN TACKLING COMPLEX QUESTION OF SYNDICAL REFORM. END SUMMARY.

1. NEW SYNDICAL MINISTER'S THINKING, AS REVEALED IN SEVERAL RECENT SPEECHES AND INTERVIEWS (INCLUDING ONE WITH N.Y. TIMES CORRESPONDENT), CENTERS ON FOLLOWING ISSUES: A) SSO REFORM IS IMMEDIATE NECESSITY; B) SEPARATION OF WORKER AND EMPLOYER COMPONENTS OF SSO; C) GREATER SSO SEPARATION FROM GOVT; D) FUTURE SSO SHOULD PROVIDE FOR VARIOUS TENDENCIES; BUT E) SSO IS NOT TO BE DISMANTLED AND ITS UNITY WILL BE PRESERVED. MARTIN VILLA, HOWEVER, HAS TO DATE AVOIDED SPECIFICS.

2. MARTIN VILLA FOLLOWED NEW APPROACH IN HIS DESIGNATIONS TO TOP SSO APPOINTIVE POSTS BY FIRST SUBMITTING THEIR NAMES FOR APPROVAL TO 50-MAN SSO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, MAJORITY OF WHOSE MEMBERS ARE CHOSEN IN ELECTIONS, ALBIET SECOND DEGREE. NAMED TO NO. 2 POST OF SSO SECRETARY GENERAL WAS 38-YEAR OLD JOSE MARIA SOCIAS HUMBERT, LOND-TIME PROTEGE OF MARTIN VILLA AND ONE OF PRINCIPAL SSO LIBERALIZERS. SOCIAS HEADED SSO IN BARCELONA FROM 1970-75. (IN 1974, SOCIAS MADE IVP TRIP TO U.S. AS ONLY SSO OFFICIAL TO EVER VISIT U.S. ON LEADER GRANT). SOCIAS WAS FIRED FROM BARCELONA SSO POST IN SEPT 1975 FOR PURSUING TOO LIBERAL A POLICY, AND IT WAS THEN RUMORED MARTIN VILLA WAS ALSO SOON TO BE FIRED FROM HIS THEN-POST AS BARCELONA CIVIL GOVERNOR FOR SAME REASONS, BUT FRANCO'S DEATH INTERVENED. IN POST-FRANCO SITUATION THEIR VIEWS HAVE BEEN VINDICATED, AND BOTH ARE NOW CONDUCTING AN EXTENSIVE SHAPEUP IN SSO. (ONE OF VICTIMS OF THIS SHAKEUP WAS ENRIQUE LEON, CHIEF UNTIL NOW OF SSO INTL RELATIONS DEPT AND LONG TIME, 1967-75, SPANISH LABOR ATTACHE IN WASHINGTON).

3. IN RECENT CONVERSATION NEW SSO SEC GEN SOCIAS OUTLINED SOME OF HIS VIEWS RE SSO FUTURE, ALTHOUGH HE REFRAINED FROM GOING INTO PREMATURE DETAIL. SOCIAS SAID HE AND MARTIN VILLA BELIEVE THAT: A) SSO IN FUTURE MUST MAINTAIN PRINCIPLE OF UNIFIED LABOR ORGANIZATION AT TOP, BUT WOULD PROBABLY ALLOW SOME (UNSPECIFIED) FORM OF LABOR PLURALISM AT THE BASE; B) SSO MUST NOT FALL INTO COMMUNIST HANDS; C) SSO MUST EVENTUALLY BE SEPARATED FROM EMPLOYERS, POLITICAL PARTIES, AND EVEN FROM GOVT; D) CONSERVATIVE FALANGIST-ORIENTED SYNDICAL "BUNKER", WHO ARE STILL STRONGLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ENTRENCHED IN SSO, ARE EXPECTED TO PUT UP STRONG RESISTANCE TO CHANGE; AND E) SYNDICAL REFORMS MUST BE VOTES IN AN SSO CONGRESS TO BE HELD THIS SPRING.

4. THE RECENT SSO ELECTORAL PROCESS SAW RE-ELECTION OF 23 PRESIDENTS, MANY FALANGISTS, IN THE OFTEN-MANIPULATED ELECTIONS FOR THE PRESIDENCIES OF 29 NATIONAL SYNDICATES. BUT THE SSO "BUNKER" ALSO EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT DEFEATS, INCLUDING THE

OUSTER FROM ONE OF THESE POSTS OF JUAN GARCIA CARRES, A PROTEGE OF FAR RIGHT LEADER JOSE ANTONIO GIRON, AND THE ELECTION OF A RELATIVE MODERATE, NOEL ZAPICO (FORMER SPANISH WORKER DELEGATE TO THE ILO) AS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WORKERS, THE SSO'S HIGHEST BODY FOR WORKER REPRESENTATION. ALSO, SOCIAH HIMSELF WILL LIKELY REPLACE HIS HARD LINE CONSERVATIVE PREDECESSOR AS A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF THE REALM, AN ACTION THAT WOULD HAVE SPILL OVER EFFECTS ON THE NATIONAL SCENE BECAUSE OF THE FINE BALANCE ON THE COUNCIL OF THE REALM BETWEEN STALWARTS OF THE FRANCO ERA AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE KING'S DESIRES FOR POLITICAL EVOLUTION.

5. IN SUM, A SYNDICAL REFORM OF UNCERTAIN PROPORTIONS APPEARS AT HAND, BRINGING UNEASE TO THE SSO'S ENTRENCHED 20,000-MAN BUREAUCRACY. MARTIN VILLA AND SOCIAH SEEK TO DEMOCRATIZE THE SSO., BUT ARE NOT PREPARED TO DISMANTEL IT OR TO SACRIFICE THE SURFACE LABOR UNITY WHICH THE SSO REPRESENTS. REFORMS WILL MEET STRONG RESISTENCE FROM THE SSO "BUNKER" BUT WILL NOT GAIN APPROVAL FROM OPPOSITION LABOR GROUPINGS (EITHER DEMOCRATIC OR COMMUNIST) WHICH CONTINUE TO CALL FOR SYNDICAL "RUPTURE". LASTLY, DESPITE DETERMINATION OF MARTIN VILLA AND SOCIAH TO PREVENT A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER OF SSO, THE RETENTION OF A UNITARY LABOR STRUCTURE CAN BE USED BY PCE-CONTROLLED SPANISH WORKERS COMMISSION (SWC) IN THEIR EFFORTS TO EFFECT JUST SUCH A TAKEOVER OF SSO FROM WITHIN (SEE REF), SINCE SWC ALREADY HAVE ELECTED MANY REPS TO LOWER LEVEL SSO POSITIONS.

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